

IT SURE FEELS LIKE A BLESSING

by Rabbi Label Lam

*And it will be, if you hearken to My commandments that I command you this day to love HASHEM, your G-d, **and to serve Him with all your heart** and with all your soul... (Devarim 11:13)*

and to serve Him with all your heart: i.e. with a service of the heart, and that is prayer... Rashi

This verse is the source of the requirement for prayer which is titled, "service of the heart". It's certainly not a cardiovascular activity! In which way then is it a service of the heart? If it's an exercise of the heart then why do we move our lips when praying?

At the risk of sounding irreverent more fundamental questions can be asked. Why should we pray-asking G-d for anything? HASHEM already knows what's good for us! Also, how can I hope to change HASHEM's mind or convince HASHEM through the process of prayer? To an earthly judge I can bring new evidence but not here!

When you want to do something well, it's worthwhile to find the best example of that endeavor and to use as a model of excellence to learn from. When the sages were constructing a template for optimal prayer they searched for and found the most successful prayer of all time.

Chana was desperate for a child. Her prayer was answered and Shmuel was born. He became a prophet and a leader who appointed King Shaul and Dovid HaMelech. That prayer shaped the contour of our history forever. What did she do differently?

The verse informs us, "Chana, she was speaking on her heart, only her lips were moving, and her voice was not heard and Eli thought her to be a drunken woman." (Shmuel A- 1:13) Part of that sounds familiar. We too move our lips and speak in an undertone that cannot be heard by our neighbor. It was so novel that Eli the Cohen thought she was exhibiting signs of drunkenness.

Another question jumps off the page about Chana's action. She is described as speaking on her heart! Isn't she speaking to HASHEM? Isn't that what true Tefilla is all about!? Of course! So why is that the description of what she was doing? The Chovos HaLevavos writes in reference to prayer, "The thoughts are drawn after the speech!" King David said similarly, "I believed because I spoke..." Speaking in a certain way impacts how we think and feel- how we believe and experience.

In much the same way that actions groove our attitudes. Someone said, "It is easier to act your way into a better way of feeling than to feel your way into a better way of acting!" The Mesilas Yeshrim said the same thing, "External action awakens the internality!" The Sefer HaChinuch also included

this notion most often as the reason or flavor of a Mitzva, "A person is affected by what he does!"

Like the great Matriarchs, Chana was without a child for many years. All that time she continued to pray! Chana is suddenly answered affirmatively? How did she change HASHEM's mind? For those many years Chana was speaking on her heart. While she was talking to HASHEM, someone was eaves dropping on her private conversations.

It wasn't Eli! He couldn't hear her and as a result thought she was drunk. It was Chana! She was continuously being affected by her own words, "Boruch ata HASHEM..." You are the only source of blessing HASHEM and the only address for what I need! She became more deeply convinced.

At some moment the idea that she grasped intellectually penetrated her heart and from there she made a successful appeal. So what changed? She changed! Chana changed the quality of her mind with the work of the heart! Asking HASHEM for our personal needs aligns us with the Source of Blessing. Then when whatever we seek is granted, **it sure feels like a blessing!**